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Submitted to the Education Committee
On Senate Bill 24, Sections 28, 29 and 31
Teacher certification, evaluation and salary

February 21, 2012

Senator Stillman and Representative Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee, I would like to share my views with you about Senate Bill 24 regarding teacher certification, evaluation and tenure.

I have had the pleasure of working as a teacher for four years in Ridgefield, one year in special education and the past three as a sixth grade social studies teacher. I decided during my senior year of high school to enter the profession of teaching after having so many wonderful experiences in the Newtown Public Schools. Even after working long days, most averaging nine hours but some as long as fourteen hours as a result of teaching, coaching a varsity sport, and volunteering, I always love my job. Now though, due to Senate Bill 24, I am concerned that the teaching profession, the stability of my job, and the future of my family are in jeopardy.

I agree with Governor Malloy that changes are needed in the teaching profession. Some components of the bill will be greatly beneficial for students and the profession such as improving access to early childhood education, moving CEU's to more effective professional development, and focusing on low performing schools to close the achievement gap.

There are also components of the bill that I strongly disagree with. I firmly believe that by implementing some of these standards, the results will be the loss of many highly qualified professionals in the field, lower standards for students, and a negative impact on the state economy. Eliminating the Master's Degree requirement, as well as the Special Education (SPED) coursework, will put under-qualified teachers in classrooms that are seeing an increase in SPED students due to mainstreaming. After completing my coursework for a MAT in Secondary Education at Sacred Heart University, I chose to return to Fairfield University to pursue a MA in Special Education. I chose to return to school to better myself; to provide my students with the best education possible. During this time, I learned the best practices for dealing with a diversity of students, as well as, the philosophy behind these best practices, from professionals who had many years of experience teaching. I do not understand how eliminating advanced education degrees for teachers, which is what will happen under the current draft of SB 24, will better serve the child.

I am very concerned with how to provide for my family in the future. My husband and I are both teachers and are committed to dedicating our lives to children by teaching. We

are trying to start a family and have applied for a mortgage. We are both worried about being able to pay our mortgage and provide for our children if this bill stays in its current form. I am concerned about possible salary fluctuations under the salary structure established under the proposed bill. The cost of living will always continue to rise. Without stable teacher salary increases, teachers will struggle to pay their mortgage and will not be contributing to the local economy and this will affect everyone. I want to be able to provide my children with what they need and I am fearful that if I stay in the teaching profession I will not be able to do so.

I am confident in my abilities to provide my students with the best education that I possibly can and believe teachers should be held accountable. I also believe that we should increase access to early childhood education, create local models of innovation, and focus on low performing schools. I do not believe that Connecticut can maintain the high level of education we currently have if other aspects of this bill are passed; including teacher certification, evaluation procedures, and the salary structure. I ask you as members of the Education Committee, to please consider the effect these actions will have not only on teachers and students but the local economy as well.

Thank you for your time and consideration.